

**Senate Committee: Education and Employment**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE  
Additional Estimates 2014 - 2015**

**Outcome: Higher Education Research and International**

**Department of Education and Training Question No. SQ15-000047**

Senator O'Neill, Deborah asked on 25 February 2015, Hansard page 24

***Functional and Efficiency review***

**Question**

Ms Paul: Yes. Nous Group consulting formed the independent review team and Jennifer Westacott has lead review oversight.

Senator O'NEILL: 'Nous Group'—is that what you said? N-O-U-S?

Ms Paul: Yes.

Senator O'NEILL: And how many consultants were given the opportunity to put in a bid for this review?

Ms Paul: That was left with the independent oversight reviewer, Jennifer Westacott.

Senator O'NEILL: It is in the hands of Ms Westacott, this decision—is that correct?

Ms Paul: Yes. And I have just been reminded that we did run a small process for interest, if—

Senator O'NEILL: Could you just take me through that please?

Ms Paul: Sure.

Senator O'NEILL: And if we could just go back to Jennifer Westacott getting this position? Talk me through the whole but history of what is going on here?

Ms Paul: Sure. I will start. Choosing the lead oversight person was a matter for ministers Pyne and Cormann. That is their decision, based on advice from us.

Senator O'NEILL: And did you provide a number of names for the ministers to consider?

Ms Paul: Yes, we did.

Senator O'NEILL: Would you be able to provide us with that list?

Ms Paul: Probably not, because it is to do with a decision that relates to cabinet. But I will certainly take it on notice—more than happy to take it on notice.

Senator O'NEILL: Are you saying that is confidential?

Ms Paul: Only in that this comes out of a cabinet process. I will take it on notice and it may be absolutely fine to give to you. I am happy to do that.

Senator O'NEILL: And what were the criteria on which you created that short list that we hope you may be able to furnish?

Ms Paul: It was to meet the particular terms of reference and to be able to do a review within a certain time et cetera. All those things were taken into account.

Senator O'NEILL: I will come back to the terms of reference. There were a number of names proffered, Jennifer Westacott was the selection of both ministers—Pyne and Cormann—

Ms Paul: Yes.

Senator O'NEILL: And the date at which that occurred.

Ms Paul: Gosh—can we take that on notice for you?

Senator O'NEILL: Yes, please. And there is this contract arrangement?

Ms Paul: Yes—I will have to clarify that too, actually.

Senator O'NEILL: And how much is that contract worth?

Ms Paul: I think the lead reviewer is working essentially pro bono. Then, of course, Nous Group will be paid for by us. We can supply those arrangements on notice, if you like.

Senator O'NEILL: Yes—how much that contract is, and who else tendered for the work.

Ms Paul: Sure.

Senator O'NEILL: And the criteria on which Nous Group was selected.

Ms Paul: Sure—we can take all that on notice.

## **Answer**

### Selection of Independent Reviewer

A number of people were initially shortlisted to lead this review for Education. After broad consideration of candidates and their availability, Ms Jennifer Westacott was identified as the preferred candidate.

Ms Westacott is undertaking this review for the department pro-bono.

### Selection of the Nous Group

The Nous Group is supporting the independent reviewer at a contract value of \$440,000 (GST inclusive). The Nous Group have been paid \$209,570.89 against this contract as at 22 May 2015.

Six consultants from government panels were initially approached to test interest, availability, capacity and capability. The names of consulting firms approached are a matter for Government and this information is considered Commercial-in-Confidence.

The Nous Group was selected based on their ability to support the independent reviewer.